Lake County News-Sun, February 7, 2009

A list detailing Lake County's most-wanted gang members has been so effective in capturing fugitives that authorities are updating it.

Since its inception last March, the most-wanted list has led to 17 gang members being captured. On Monday, at a news conference hosted by Congressman Mark Kirk, Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, more names will be added to the list.

Those names, which are available on the Lake County Sheriff's Office Web site, feature four subjects who also cracked last March's Top 10 list, including murder suspects Jose Delgado and Edward Perez. The list's other six names are all new.

Since March, when Kirk, Curran and the ATF launched the list, 17 people have been captured, said Eric Elk, a spokesman for Kirk.

"It was such a success in terms of all the media participating," Elk said. "(Gang members) either saw their picture or friends, family and neighbors saw their pictures."

The push to publicize the names of those on the list is important because of the growing gang problem in the area, authorities say. According to the 2009 National Gang Threat Assessment, Lake County has about 3,500 suspected gang members, which places the county behind only Cook and Will counties in Illinois.

According to Kirk's office, Illinois has more gang members per 1,000 residents -- between eight and 11 -- than any other state.

In recent months, the ATF launched a special unit to combat gangs in Lake County. ATF Special Agent-in-Charge Andy Traver will discuss what actions his agency is taking on Monday, while he publicizes the most-wanted gang members.